Active learning reinforces other methods of delivery.

Cooperative learning effective when individual learning is not.

Greater diversity of ideas; less impersonal, more meaningful engagement with ideas.

Better learning by teaching/explaining to others.

Provides a model for future scholarly work/professional tracks that involve collaboration.
Challenges of Classroom Discussion

- Adjusting to the student culture of unpreparedness
- Dealing with silences and getting all students to actively participate
- Equalizing the contributions of all students
- Keeping the discussion on-target
- Encouraging students to discuss with each other, not just with you
- Preventing the discussion from turning into a lecture by default

Advantages of Online Discussion

- Work outside the classroom increases time on task
- Discussions are independent of place and time
- Students have time to prepare and research their contributions
- Written contributions tend to be higher quality than oral contributions
- Students learn from each other, not just the teacher
- All students can contribute, not just a few
Advantages of Online Discussion

- Sensitive topics can be discussed more comfortably
- Students can more easily connect ideas with lived experience, making the topic more relevant
- Instructors can track and evaluate each student’s contributions more easily
- Students have a record of the discussion to which they can later refer

Challenges of Online Discussion

- Adjusting to student culture of procrastination
- Adopting student-centered approaches, and learning to become a ‘guide’ or ‘facilitator’
- Communicating your expectations for depth and type of response
- Dealing with technical issues
- Avoiding the dangers of misinterpretations
- Finding the optimal balance between private and public discussion
- Maintaining a presence without dominating the discussion
Paradigms of Academic Discourse

Unlike other types of conversations, classroom discussions are purposeful and require preparation. Having a good class discussion depends on four basic factors:
• The discussion must have a purpose.
• Students must have something to say.
• Students must feel comfortable participating.
• Meaningful questions must be asked.

Social Dialogue

Conversation which focuses on concerns other than the subject matter of the course, but provides a personal forum where collegiality and trust can be established.
• Serves as social “icebreaker”
• Facilitates one-on-one relationships (bonding)
• Fosters community-building
• Can lead to increased motivation and sense of investment on the part of students
Examples of Social Dialogue

- **8 nouns**: Participants use 8 nouns which best define them and expand on each.
- **Coffee house**: Internet “café” space is established for social conversation.
- **Scavenger hunt**: Participants are given specific questions that they must answer about their colleague through interactive conversation, internet search, second-party, etc.
- **Two truths, one lie**: Each participant tells two truths and one lie about themselves, and classmates must try to determine which is which.

Argumentative Dialogue

Conversation in which the purpose is to analyze and present a particular point of view, persuade others to agree with it, but can move beyond debate to honoring multiple perspectives, sorting through tensions, and seeking deeper meanings.

- Oriented toward convincing others of one’s own point of view
- Participants can have an agenda
- Is often used to analyze or critique an existing argument
- Can be used to discover different perspectives
Examples of Argumentative Dialogue

- **Debate:** Participants assume opposing position on a controversial topic.
- **Advocacy:** Participants take on an advocacy position, and must defend it.
- **Persuasion:** Participants take on a persuasive task, and try to convince their classmates. A vote may follow.
- **Critique:** Participants are given a piece of writing or other text and asked to analyze it via any number of criteria.
- **Analytical construction:** Participants are given an issue and asked to construct a connection, cause-and-effect, etc. through analysis and support.
- **Séance:** Participants take on the role of a dead scholar or famous person and are asked to respond to dialogue as that person would have.

Pragmatic Dialogue

Conversation in which the process serves ends beyond the dialogue itself and carries a goal of some sort of collectively constructed product.

- Oriented towards group goals
- Limited time frame for accomplishment of goals
- Group investment favored over personal accomplishment
- Constraints of time and resources foster practical solutions over ideal responses
Examples of Pragmatic Dialogue

- Problem solving: Participants are given a problem (generally a case study) for which they must find the best solution.
- Consensus Building: Participants are given a scenario and they must come to agreement of some sort.
- Mediation: Participants are given a scenario in which there is conflict, and they must resolve the conflict using mediation techniques.
- Synthesis/construction: Participants are given the task of creation, generally with specific criteria that impose limits on means and methods.

Visionary Dialogue

Conversation in which the primary goal is to explore a variety of possibilities and options. But can expand thinking beyond conventional perspectives or perceived limitations, “think outside the box”, and use imagination and intuition to create a product or solution that is innovative or ingenious.

- Oriented toward the “out-of-the-ordinary”
- Focused on adding to or expanding options
- Is often used to problem-solve as well as create
- Searches for the “ideal”
Examples of Visionary Dialogue

- Brainstorming: Participants spontaneously contribute ideas. Responses, challenges, and critiques are reserved until the end.
- Best-case scenario: Participants look at a situation or circumstance and try to identify its best or most positive possible outcomes.
- Blue sky thinking: Participants imagine scenarios and outcomes based on unlimited resources, time, and/or information.
- What if? Participants look at a circumstance and imagine the outcome if one factor could be changed to the advantage of the project, done factor by factor.

Communicating Rules of Interaction: Protocols

- Determine (and articulate) the purpose of the discussion
- Define the topic discussed and establish clear boundary distinctions
- Indicate what types of speech are acceptable and what types are not
- Establish procedures for introducing an idea, discussing an idea, and making decisions
- Identify and sequence the phases of the discussion
- Lay out the steps involved in the discussion process
- Impose time limitations
Communicating Rules of Interaction: Protocols

- Establish and define participant roles
- Determine space limitations on individual commentary
- Define when a participant can talk
- Limit what a participant can talk about
- Determine how much one must participate
- Direct response and/or rebuttal
- Require an action (such as a decision or consensus) before moving on to the next topic
- Require an end product (such as a position or proposal)

Effective Design/Development Tips

- Link electronic class discussion to course goals
- Be specific about what students need for foundational knowledge (readings, etc.)
- Ask students to cite from the readings or elsewhere when making statements
- Ask students to articulate their experiences by using examples
- Require unique contributions
- Embed in the assignment the need to respond directly to other students and their ideas
- Divide students into small groups (4-6 people) to foster discussion
Effective Design/Development Tips

- Impose specific time and word requirements on a discussion
- Model the activity yourself first, particularly with social dialogue
- Begin discussions with a thoughtful question
- Make sure your students know how you will be present in the discussion
- Establish a regular schedule of presence and feedback
- Always summarize or reiterate the important points of an online discussion
- Make sure that participation in discussion is included in the students’ grades

Types of Questions to Avoid

- "Guess What I’m Thinking" Questions
- Yes/No Question and Leading Questions
- Rhetorical Questions
- Information Retrieval Questions